



Authentic Lives

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Spring 2008 Newsletter

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"Every action, thought, and word matters and has weight and impact on the collective."

Greetings and Happy Spring!

This is the time of the year when we metaphorically come up for air. We leave the protection of our cocoons and nests and poke our noses out into the potential of another spring. It has been a time of gestation, a time of insulation from the outside world.

With the coming of spring, we start to see the changes of nature all around us. We can smell the earth as it warms up; we see the budding of the trees, the wee faces of the crocuses as they pop up from under the ground. We become aware of the world around us and within us.

Often this is an opportune time for spring cleaning, for clearing away the clutter in our lives. It is also a marvelous time for cleaning the clutter of the mind; the clutter that gets in the way of us having the lives we dream of. Hopefully, we are prepared to do whatever it takes to take those baby steps as we make those small changes that, added together over time, will create the life we so long for. Be patient, compassionate and gentle with yourself as you take those baby steps. Take time to celebrate success, big or small.

Have an awesome summer!

Barbara

Letting go of ego raises our awareness of impact

By Barbara McDowall, featured in Guelph Mercury Faith Column

How aware are you of your impact on the people in your world and the world around you? To do no harm (in thought, word, or action) is one of the tenets of a number of faiths. For that to happen means we must be paying attention and aware, as often as possible, of what those thoughts, words and actions are before they take form. Not only must we be aware of the impact on others, we must also be aware of the impact they have on ourselves.

The ego or our unconscious would have us believe there is only right and wrong. There really is no right no wrong; only what works and what doesn't work. With that perspective, we are liberated from the game of blame and shame.

Please see **Letting go of ego ...** on page 2

“Spiritual realization is to see clearly that what I perceive, experience, think, or feel is ultimately not who I am, that I cannot find myself in all those things that continuously pass away.”

Letting go of ego raises our awareness of impact from page 1

Thoughts become things which in turn become behaviours. Where we focus our attention, our thoughts, is what we will create. This is what will manifest and grow. Have you ever heard of someone getting more of what she said she didn't want? That tells you something about where her attention is focused.

Paramahansa Yogananda and numerous other spiritual teachers believed everything, not just the physical, is energy and we have a responsibility to think before we speak, act or think.

Quantum theory supports this premise. Recently, there has been much talk about the movies, *The Secret* and *What the Bleep?!* Oprah Winfrey and Larry King have both dealt with them

extensively on their respective TV shows. In fact, this information has been around for quite some time. A number of faith traditions in the east and west have addressed this subject. Go into any bookstore and there you will find numerous books written on the subject. Those two movies have gotten our attention and there is an eagerness to know more and to know how to apply it.

What is the impact of your thoughts, words and actions on your relationships and the world around you? Every action, thought, and word matters and has weight and impact on the collective. To be aware of one's impact means to be awake and conscious and prepared to make choices and take responsibility for that impact.

This false thinking of the ego keeps us perpetually ungrounded and separate from each other unable to recognize our common divinity. This unconscious thinking of the ego fuels the stories of lack and loss that keep us in a never ending state of suffering. This what the ego, the unconscious does best and it will do whatever it has to in order to hold on to control, to ensure its existence.

Once we become aware of the attachments in our lives that contribute to our suffering, we can choose to let them go in order to live more fully present and conscious.

At the moment, we are becoming more keenly aware of our impact on the planet, ecologically. What about our impact on the world in other ways? Our world would be changed if we slowed down and were more aware of the many different foot prints we leave behind.

Awareness is what will set us free from the yoke of the ego, the unconscious. It opens us up to choices and helps us recognize we are more than a body. We are spirit itself.

For the next week, pay attention to your thoughts, your choices, your relationships, your language, and your actions. Where do they take you? How do those thoughts make you feel? What changes are you prepared to make to ensure your peace of mind?

You have a choice to wake up, be more aware of your impact on the world and make your actions, words, and thoughts congruent with doing no harm or to stay in service to the capricious unconscious that is intent on wreaking havoc.

Eckhart Tolle writes in *A New Earth: Awakening to your Life's Purpose*, “Spiritual realization is to see clearly that what I perceive, experience, think, or feel is ultimately not who I am, that I cannot find myself in all those things that continuously pass away.”

New! Marriage Preparation Course – Conscious Relationships, Healthy Marriages

I have had many requests for a marriage preparation course and I am pleased to announce the creation of Conscious Relationships, Healthy Marriages.

The key to any successful relationship is awareness. Whether we choose to be in a relationship that involves marriage or whether we have chosen to simply be in an intimate relationship with another, this is true.

There are great benefits in either case to spending time before entering this relationship in a period of discovery ~ in discovering what each of you brings to this new relationship and to learning some simple skills and tools that will be available at challenging times. The more aware and prepared you are, the more successful you will be in navigating this rich pageant of life.

I have chosen to call my relationship classes, Conscious Relationships, Healthy Marriages for just that reason.

Often couples have found such classes to be mandatory without being made aware of the benefits to be reaped. Very often couples come together in relationship or marriage with no road map and no skills or tools to navigate the rich pageant of life.

Conscious Relationships, Healthy Marriages provides just those ingredients. Imagine entering the most important time of your life with some clear understanding of who you both are and what you bring to your relationship. How assuring to know there are simple tools at your disposal to ensure you can weather whatever comes your way in an authentic and aware state of being.

Conscious Relationships, Healthy Marriages is a 4 week self directed program with regular weekly meetings to explore challenges and learnings. The course includes a workbook, a journal for each person, and a copy of the Four Agreements. The cost is \$225 per couple.

“Very often couples come together in marriage with no road map and no skills or tools to navigate the rich pageant of their life.”



Coming Soon! Website Re-design, Barbara's Blog and more



I am very excited to be near completion of the transition of the Authentic Live website into a content-managed site. There will be lots of additional material!

A new addition will be Barbara's Blog which will be an opportunity for me to share some of my thoughts. I invite you to share your thoughts with me.

I look forward to continuing to serve you by providing more resources, tools and information to assist you in your life journey.

The Art of Communication

The hallmark of successful relationships is the awareness and practice of good communication. Practice the following and see what happens to the quality of your relationships.

1. Listen with intent to understand, not to plan your response.
2. Learn to sincerely reflect back your understanding of what has been said to you.
3. People are almost always doing the best they can with the awareness they have.
4. What is said and what is actually heard are often very different. The response you get will indicate if you have been heard correctly.
5. Different people need to be communicated to in different ways.
6. Every person is acting from his or her own particular map of the world. Learn what the other person's map looks like!
7. It is more important to understand than it is to be right. Put a conflict resolution process in place and use it!
8. Avoid making every communication about YOU!
9. Love and fear cannot occupy the same space. Stay away from fear!
10. Always assume there is something you don't know when you enter a conversation.

Top Ten Spiritual Growth Ideas

By Bruce Tallman, Spiritual Director

1. The purpose of life is to become God by participation, to become integrated into God. What could be a greater purpose?
2. Every one of God's creatures is a theophany, a sign of God. Every human being is a facet of the face of God.
3. Paradoxically, if you accept that most relationships are dysfunctional, it opens up a space where God's grace can flow in and transform the relationships.
4. Your relationship with your partner, friend, or co-worker can be your spiritual practice. It challenges you to develop wisdom, patience, forgiveness, generosity, unconditional love, etc.
5. When children deserve it the least, they need our love the most. When we admit we need God the most, God is most active.
6. The human capacity for horrendous evil is due to a failure to develop imagination, and therefore a failure to develop compassion.
7. There are whole orders of knowledge other than that which come through the senses and reason. Therefore, revelation by God, and imagination, are as important as science.
8. Thomas Aquinas wrote that angels are "thinking thoughts", that is, pure spirits. So, when we think thoughts of peace and joy, perhaps we let good angels in. When we think thoughts of greed and envy, perhaps we let evil spirits in.
9. Rollo May said the greatest cause of transformation is acceptance. When you realize God accepts you as you are, gratitude motivates all you do.
10. We need more realistic images of enlightened human beings. We tend to think they don't have needs, vulnerabilities, and shadows, don't mourn and suffer like the rest of us.

Sources: Richard Rohr, Soren Kierkegaard, Karen Armstrong, Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Merton, Eckhart Tolle, Ken Wilber, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Carolyn Myss, John of the Cross, Don Richard Riso, Major Catechisms, popular sayings etc, etc, all simplified. The point is to focus on ideas not authors.

Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker. Expose your ideas to the dangers of controversy. Speak your mind and fear less the label of 'crackpot' than the stigma of conformity. And on issues that seem important to you, stand up and be counted at any cost.

...Thomas J. Watson



Recommended

*I believe that God loves questions more than creeds, doubt more than dogma, and faith more than belief...And I believe that the only hell is the one in which you live when you imagine a God who fears honest questioning.
...Rabbi Rami Shapiro*

- ❖ ***Disappearance of the Universe*** by Gary Renard
- ❖ ***The Places that Scare You*** by Pema Chodron
- ❖ ***Awareness: The Perils and Opportunities of Reality*** by Anthony De Mello
- ❖ ***The Right Questions: Ten Essential Questions to Guide You to an Extraordinary Life*** by Debbie Ford
- ❖ ***The Power of Kindness*** by Piero Ferrucci
- ❖ ***A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*** by Eckhart Tolle
- ❖ ***Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*** by Parker Palmer
- ❖ **My Stroke of Inspiration** Watch this powerful talk by Jill Bolte Taylor. This is a perfect companion piece to Eckhart Tolle's **A New Earth** ~ <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/13/when-a-brain-scientist-suffers-a-stroke/>
- ❖ **The Last Lecture** by Prof. Randy Pausch ~ http://www.oprah.com/videochannel/videochannel_player.jhtml?video=1178&category=31
- ❖ **www.DailyOM.com** Powerful daily inspirational messages. Sign up and you'll be glad you did!

Inspiration



Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. You somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

...Steve Jobs, Apple Inc.

Services: Spiritual Life Coaching, Weddings, Baptisms, Celebrations of Life (Funerals), Circles & Workshops.

Spiritual Life Coaching

Are you really living or just trying to keep your head above water?

Spiritual life coaching is a one-to-one relationship with a professional coach who helps you clarify and articulate what you want most from life and how best to achieve it. It helps you create the results you want in life, work, relationships, and spiritual development—in spite of the obstacles you encounter.

The key to continued success in life and work is not just motivation; it is momentum—the ability to produce results even when motivation fails. Regular coaching sessions can help you sustain action through tough times, learn from setbacks, and discover your inner resources and strengths as you persist toward your highest goals. Coaching can take place in person or by phone.

Weddings

Let me assist you in creating the day of your dreams, at the location of your choice. I will guide you as we create a ceremony that best reflects who you both are and what is important to you about this very special moment in your lives.

Baptisms

The arrival of a new life on the planet is a very special occasion. It is truly one of life's magnificent passages. In the early life of that child, some families choose to hold a welcoming ritual, a time for this new life to be fully welcomed into the human family. This can involve promises by parents and god parents about the love, support and nurturing they will offer this new little one for the rest of that child's life. You may want to personalize your child's welcome with the inclusion of favourite readings and rituals.

Celebrations of Life/Funerals

This is as important a ceremony as any in our life time. And to give it the time and attention it is due before (and after) our passing allows you to have some say in what it contains and how and where it is delivered. You are included in the process right from the start and what is important to you is a significant factor.

Circles & Workshops

A number of circles and workshops are held on a regular basis throughout the year with a focus on awareness, consciousness, ego and authenticity as well as living meaningfully and dying joyfully.

For more information, please visit www.authenticlives.com

"You have been extremely helpful, accessible, compassionate, inspiring and generous with your time and wisdom. You are one of the teachers for whom I am so grateful. Thank you!"

"Sincere thanks for performing such a beautiful ceremony! You exceeded our expectations in everyway. We are still receiving compliments about how amazing you were. We will never forget the most incredible day of our lives. You really played a special role. We are forever grateful."

"Thanks you so much for making it (baptism) such a special ceremony and day for us. It was exactly what we envisioned to welcome Cole into the world. Our families commented what a wonderful job you did and how proud they were to be part of the event. You did a fantastic job."

"I saw this as an excellent medium (The Artist's Way) to continue "my personal growth"! There was growth, adventure, intrigue, humour and so much more. The more I gave the more I got. Encouragement to all: make the choice...make the difference!"

Upcoming! September Teachings

Our concern must be to live while we're alive...to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with living behind a facade designed to conform to external definitions of who and what we are.

...Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

❖ ***Living Meaningfully, Dying Joyfully***

A conversation about what it means to accept our own impermanence and how it can enhance and enliven our relationships and our work in the world.

❖ ***Awakening to Joy, Freedom and Purpose***

A conversation about Awareness, Ego, Consciousness and Authenticity for those who have been inspired by A New Earth; The Power of Intention; The Four Agreements; The Secret and What the Bleep Do We Know.

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

...Henri Bergson

